

HIRALAL SETH
BY

GANDHI
IN ARMS

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PREFACE

Gandhi who is now on war path has always been a friend of Britain. Ellen Wilkinson once called him as "the best policeman of Britain in India." The author of the book has humorously remarked in a passage that even after the war, the British considered him a patron Saint of theirs, a sort of second St. George. This seems an apt description of his past stand.

However, as the war progressed and the demand of India for self-determination remained unaccepted, there was stiffening of the upper lips at Wardha. A mild form of Civil Disobedience was resorted to in 1940, the aim being not to embarrass Britain and keep the door for negotiations wide open. Then came Russo-German War, Pearl Harbour and attempts by the Congress to arrive at some settlement with Britain in face of the common enemy. The attempts were frustrated by what Gandhi describes as "the ill-fated Cripps proposals."

After disappointment with Cripps, Gandhi "took up arms."

This book discusses the gradual transition in Gandhi's views from one of "benevolent neutrality" to "Civil Disobedience with non-embarrassment" and then finally "complete belligerency" towards Britain.

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------|----|
| 1. War Rumbings at Wardha | ... | ... | 5 |
| 2. From Ramgarh to Pearl Harbour | | ... | 17 |
| 3. Gandhi Militant | ... | , ... | 32 |
| 4. Fighting on Empty Stomach | ... | ... | 52 |

CHAPTER I

WAR RUMBLINGS AT WARDHA

The war which came in wake of Hitler's invasion of Poland was the first European conflict that Congress faced since its coming of age under the leadership of Gandhi. The holocaust of 1914, which was responsible for so much controversy among the world socialists culminating in the murder of such eminent leaders of the working class as Jaurès, and separation of Lenin from the pro-war faction of the second international, found India without any cut and dried plans for dealing with the novel situation. While terrorism was galore and here and there some regiments mutilated India's political parties like Congress were either indifferent to the booming of guns on the plains of Europe or pinned their hopes in the British victory as the best safeguard of India's freedom.

In 1939, it was however different. The Congress had fought two major struggles with Britain under Gandhi's leadership and most Congressmen had no soft corner in their hearts for Britain. Jawahar Lal Nehru had during the past decade schooled them, in a policy of internationalism and his idea of opposition to war. Fascism and Imperialism had been accepted by the Congress. But even Nehru had not faced a European war, and the balance of forces in September, 1939, was not what he or any other student of inter-

national affairs had imagined it to be. Russia's pact with Germany had created a situation which was at once baffling; at least for man who did not see eye to eye with communists in all matters. He could not back the Russian action, because he believed that the cause of anti-Fascism was dear to his heart. Then should he support Britain? That would mean helping a country which his Marxism and Nationalism told him was Imperialist. The Labour Party of England had done so, while the Communist Party was calling the Chamberlain Government Imperialist. Nehru, who has hated both these parties in the past, while learning much from both, found that he should again follow the middle way.

To Gandhi, war was a similar trying experience. For over twenty years he had talked about Non-violence as the best weapon to avert war. He had used this weapon against Britain, and he had advised foreign nations such as Ethiopians, Chinese and Czechs to practise non-violence against aggression. While Pacifism had ceased to be the same force in Europe, it was in 1914, and while many of those British Pacifists, who had courted imprisonment in 1914, were now all out for help to Colonel Blimp, Gandhi still clung to his creed. Pacifism did not mean to him, as it did to his Western prototypes merely calling of world conferences for disarmament, and redistribution of colonies; it was part and parcel of his very existence, a weapon to be used not only in political sphere, but also in every walk of life, be it a religious dispute or a matter relating to everyday conduct of man.

He considered war to be a holly horror let loose b

that the British may not go too far in their war against Germany. He would not have Germany to be trampled and destroyed. His own experience of British rule in India confirmed his suspicions about British war aims.

Thus Gandhi's attitude in 1939 towards Britain was that its cause was negatively right. It was fighting to stop aggression. It should have avoided fighting. War is an evil at any rate. But since it was fighting Gandhi could have only sympathy for it, but could not give it material help. He did not want Britain to be licked, but thought if the British took war into Germany, we may have Versailles all over again. On the whole he wanted to wait and see how the events shaped themselves.

Nehru, who had also his doubts about Britain's war aims could not afford to wait. He was also concerned about safety of London and did not want the Germans to be treated as at Versailles, but he lavished no sentimentalism on either. His view was clear. Chamberlain Government was Imperialist. War against Fascism was not wrong if Britain applied the right of self-determination to India. Let it do so.

The Working Committee resolution of September, 1939, after saying that India was opposed to Fascism: which it considered akin to Imperialism, put the following question to Britain :—

"If the war is to defend the *status quo* of Imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges, then India can have nothing to do with it.

"If, however, the issue is democracy and a world

order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy.

If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions and establish full democracy in India and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a constituent Assembly. A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy utilising the world's knowledge and resources for progress and advancement of humanity."

The use of violence against aggression implicit in the above resolution was a deviation from Gandhian creed of unadulterated non-violence. But it was not an innovation in Congress policy. The Congress had been forced to make use of violence during internal disorders while it ruled over eight provinces. If violence was necessary for punishing enemies of public inside a state, why should it not be used to suppress the international gangsters? Some of the ablest lieutenants of Gandhi had resorted to violence in upholding the rule of law during Congress regime.

Gandhi had said that he should have liked them to avoid such violence, but he had not launched any campaign against it just as he did after the Chauri

Chaura incident. This preventive violence was apparently different in his eyes from the deliberate violence used either by the state or the people.

Again in case of Abyssinia, the Congress policy was one of sympathy towards resistance of the Ethiopians, while Gandhi, though he had asked them to use non-violence, had not sought to exaggerate this difference between his philosophy and Congress foreign policy. Dealing with Spain and Czechoslovakia he had similarly let the Congress go ahead with its plan while he registered his note of dissent.

So now that Congress had hitched its wagon to collective resistance to aggression, Gandhi did not stand in its way.

Instead he stressed the need of solidarity in backing up the Congress demand. His view was that the Working Committee demand in order to be effective should be backed by all.

That came as a considerable shock to those astute wire pullers at Whitehall, who had been for some time past telling the people across the Atlantic how good to Britain the old little Gandhi was! They had imagined him a patron saint of theirs, a sort of second Saint George while Nehru was the echo of Kremlin's voice in India. But they had greater shocks in store for them.

Gandhi was carefully watching the British reaction to Working Committee resolution. It was clear to see that Whitehall was ignoring the resolution and instead flying a kite. The plan was to back up the Muslim League in its campaign of two-nation theory and atrocity mongering thus on the one hand creating

a communal unrest in the country, stone-walling any Congress move against Britain, and on the other discrediting the Congress as unrepresentative of Muslims.

The Congress resolution had been published in America and elsewhere. Britain had to indulge in some logic chopping if the arguments advanced by the Working Committee had to be refuted. Hence the plea that Congress was unrepresentative of the people and therefore did not deserve to be entrusted with power.

Actually, as was pointed out recently by an English journalist, it was more representative than the government of Mr. Winston Churchill or of Chamberlain was of British people.

Attacking Congress and hitting it below the belt was in fact an assault on Gandhi. No wonder then that the old man was quick to scent danger in the air and came out with a sharp retort. Said Gandhi: "Perhaps silence on my part at this juncture would be a distinct disservice both to India and England. I was unprepared for the old familiar flavour in the debate in the shape of drawing comparisons and attacking the Congress. I maintain that the Congress is an all inclusive body. Without offence to anybody it can be said of it that it is the one body that has represented for one-half a century without a rival the vast masses of India irrespective of class or creed. It has not a single interest opposed to that of the Mussalman or that of the people of the States. Recent years have shown unmistakably that the Congress represents beyond doubt the interests of the people of the States. It is this civilization

which has asked for a clear definition of the British intentions. If the British are fighting for the freedom of all then their representatives have to state in the clearest possible terms that the freedom of India is necessarily included in the war aims. The context of such freedom can only be decided by Indians and them alone. Surely it is wrong for Lord Zetland to complain, as he does though in gentle terms that the Congress should at this juncture, when Britain is engaged in a life and death struggle ask for a clear declaration of British intentions. I suggest that the Congress has done nothing strange or less than honourable in asking for such a declaration. Only a free India's help is of value. And the Congress has every right to know that it can go to the people and tell them that at the end of the war India's status as an independent country is as much assured as that of Great Britain. As a friend of the British, I therefore appeal to English statesmen that they will forget the old language of imperialists and open a new chapter for all those who have been held under imperial bondage."

The English, however, were in no mood to heed the advice of such "friends." That world had lost the meaning that was attached to it in prewar days. The friends of yesterday were enemies of today. Adolf Hitler whom the British ruling class were never tired of calling a friend since his rise in 1933 because it suited them to use Germany as a buffer State between Bolshevism and Western Europe; now all of a sudden ceased to be a friend and became an enemy. Similarly Gandhi was their friend, so long as the Congress ministries

functioned, as long as he expressed a holy horror at destruction of London without raising the embarrassing question of India's right of self-determination. They could then quote him to the Americans as a friend of the Allied cause. But now it was different. He was no longer a friend. They would not say so frankly, hoping still to play him off against the Congress, and deceiving themselves with the fond illusion that at worst he was a harmless lunatic babbling pacifism and non-violence and not at all likely to harm British interests.

They were right in their surmise, for the psychological atmosphere at Wardha was conducive to detached contemplation rather than political action. The war was at standstill sphinx-like and one did not know if the stalemate on western front was to last for several years. London had been visited by German bombers, but it had not been plastered in a way that men in Wardha should assume that war had reached a decisive stage. While hopes of peace were still there, Roosevelt, Pope, Gandhi and Bernard Shaw, all thought that war might end if only they could talk both sides to reason. If they failed, as they did, it might last for years, with Germany blockading Britain from continent and Britain doing the same on high seas. But while Gandhi standing on the non-man's land between Congress and British Government was still appealing for peace, the British had sent the first salvo flying into the Congress ranks. Mass arrests had begun in India a few weeks after as if the war had not broken out between Britain and Japan but the former and India and political prisoners were being kept as hostages.

The tempo of repression had increased following the resignations of Congress ministers, when full powers were vested in a White Bureaucracy responsible to no one except itself. Could the Working Committee stand by passively while picked young men were shoved off into prison? It met on November 25 to consider the situation. The left supported by the followers of Subhas Bose demanded action. It was asked why Civil Disobedience was being delayed. Working Committee members on Gandhi's invitation declared that the country was not yet prepared for struggle.

The British Government on the other hand was ready to attack. As the situation on Western Front hung fire it could open up a front against Indian Nationalists.

Gandhi's advice was constructive programme, Khadi work and service of Harijans. That was his method of political work in the country when there was enough excitement, but no morale to back up a prolonged fight. Back in 1933, he had sought to absorb unrest among people in such a programme.

Besides lack of preparedness, there was, he thought danger of communal friction. So it was better to let the storm in the Muslim league tea cup subside before taking any step.

But one swallow does not make a summer and Gandhi's patience, however great showed signs of exhaustion, towards the beginning of the new year.

On February 14, he gave an interview which was the first step toward the break with Britain which came after Ramgarh. He said :—

“Lord Zetland's recent pronouncement, if re-

ported correctly sets at rest all speculation regarding Government's attitude towards nationalist demand. I have been taught to believe that the Dominion Status of Westminster Statute variety is akin to Independence and includes the right to cede. Therefore I had bought there would be no difficulty about Britain allowing India to determine her own status. But Lord Zetland makes it clear that Britain not India has to determine it. In other words British hold on India must remain."

He also put the burden upon the nationalists of solving the minorities question and the like. I have shown how impossible this is without previous recognition of India's independence, no doubt subject to safeguards.

His lordship thinks that because some Indians have received the boon of English education and have learnt the ideas of freedom from British writers, they will want always to be under British tutelage euphemistically called partnership. This is what I call banging the door upon the nationalist position. Does it mean a pact deadlier than was announced at the last Round Table Conference? If it does, it is a declaration of war against Nationalists who are out to destroy the Empire spirit.

I submit that it is wrong to dismiss the Indian claim by accusing the Nationalists of idealism. I assure him that Nationalist India is dreadfully in earnest."

About the time this interview was given, Nehru at a press Conference held in Bombay declared that

Nationalism and British Imperialism were irreconcilably opposed to each other. Either the one must triumph or the other. British Imperialism must be toned down in its attitude towards India, but it could not satisfy the demands of Nationalists.

Thus on the eve of Ramgarh Congress, Gandhi and Nehru who both had their differences with each other at the outbreak of war, were drawing nearer to each other. Six months of parleying with Britain had convinced them that it was hard to please Britain. Britain had no war aims except to keep the balance of power in Europe, and make Poland as Bernard Shaw put it "the gun-emplacement for establishing Rumanoff dynasty in Ruasia."

The British who had banked on hopes of disunity in the country and inside the Congress were sadly disappointed, as Gandhi and Nehru, each in turn unmasked their hypocrisy about India.

The mantle of presidentship for Ramgarh Congress was laid on the shoulders of a man who was neither a whole-hogging follower of Gandhi nor of Nehru but represented a synthesis of the ideas of both and could thus best guide the nation.

CHAPTER II FROM RAMGARH TO PEARL HARBOUR

By his consistent hammering at Britain, Gandhi had once again set the entire political India thinking as to what his next move would be. It was difficult to imagine that Congress could take any step independently of him as there was no difference of opinion between him and the Congress on the vital demands of India. Besides inevitably his utterances attracted more attention than that of any other Congress leader. The Congress had to subtly clothe its pronouncements in a language which gave the impression that while it was opposed to both Nazism and British Imperialism, it welcomed the formation of a genuine Democratic Front against Fascism. Gandhi attacked with the naked fist, regardless of the fact who his victim was, Germany or England, the only thing that counted being truth and non-violence, whoever fell short of it was doomed.

It was this naked fist which he had previously shook in face of Britain that he now hanged on the table and told the delegates that if they wanted him to lead the country they must give him full powers. It was an age of dictatorship. He was not afraid of being called a dictator. He seemed to tell them that they had a choice between his dictatorship, that of the British and of Hitler.

They could choose whichever one they liked only they should remember that while Hitler had to burn a Reichstag and kill thousands of his opponents to become dictator, he was a bloodless dictatorship. They let him have his way. The fate of the nation was in his hands. Just as the members of the Parliament after the dethronement of King Charles gave themselves up to Cromwell, so the Congress delegates headed by their President M. Azad surrendered the keys of the household to him. Gandhi was delegated full powers at Ramgarh.

The Left wing Congressmen headed by Nehru and Jai Parkash Narain also willy-nilly fell in line with him. The Russian invasion of Finland, and the refusal of British Socialists to come to aid of their prototypes in India had created no little confusion in left ranks, while the communists and several socialists called the war an Imperialist; and while Nehru and Jai Parkash argued on the lines reminiscent of Lenin's speech at Zurich Congress of socialists during the war, in practice they let Gandhi have his way.

For the Indian left there were only two ways, to preach the doctrine of revolutionary defeatism against war or to strike at Britain in particular and get freedom for India and make support for war conditional on it. We have seen that they followed the latter policy. But they soon found that situated as they were with their large Proletarian and Peasant following, they were inevitably drawn towards communist policy. This Nehru, did not want. He had condemned Soviet aggression against Finland and he did not take the communist orthodox line in

all matters.

The best way was to leave everything in the hands of Gandhi who was the master of a policy of compromise. The bargaining could not be done by the socialists. At any moment they may strike harder than was good in this war of attrition which Gandhi had in mind when he took over command.

So Nehru, as in 1931, at the time of Gandhi-Irwin pact let Gandhi have his way. He was then doubtful about the policy of appeasement towards Britain, but did not like to say so. In 1940, again, he felt that urge to break off with Britain, but his differences with communists prevented him.

The league against Imperialism condemned his action in 1931. In 1940 people everywhere in the world still true to the socialist tradition made note of his vacillating policy, which he justified on the ground of national unity.

But the left disunity was not the only reason of Gandhi's come-back to power.

We have said that he could himself be a dictator and wanted dictatorial powers. It remains to be said that no less person than the President of the Congress M. Azad had urged the delegates to accept him as Dictator. He had said that "in the prevailing darkness of the times it is faith in the bright side of human nature which sustains the great soul of Mahatma Gandhi. He is always prepared to take advantage of every opening which might lead to a mutual settlement without feeling that he is weakening his unsailable position."

In saying this the Maulana had not only paid his

own tribute to Gandhi's statesmanship, but also expressed the sentiments of the man in the street in the perplexing situation in which India found itself. The faith which sustained the soul of Gandhi was also the faith which made Maulana Azad and the man in the street look to Gandhi for guidance. In an age of economic and political unrest only very strong class-conscious Marxists could remain without a faith. The average man in India especially after the cataclysmic changes of war was more and more in need of a faith in somebody who could deliver the goods. As the caterpillars of destruction rolled on the European plains, with aeroplanes roaring overhead and guns booming on land ; no doubt as he heard all this din around him, it jarred on the nerves of the average Indian, and like his prototypes elsewhere he wanted somebody to guide him, someone to lead him to action.'

So the popularity of Gandhi, if anything increased after the war. Since to be ruled by a strong man was the fashion everywhere why not have one in India ?

But Gandhi was not anxious for hurling his legions into the jaws of death, as the European dictators had done. He did not want to start civil disobedience in a huff.

"He was in a better position to talk to Britain after Ramgarh than before. The stalemate on the Western Front had ended and Germany had rolled up the map in Denmark and Norway and Britain's difficulties on the continent had increased."

"I would not hit below the belt, said Gandhi in

effect I know you are in trouble. I would not embarrass you."

This benevolent attitude towards Britain should not be confused with the earlier pacific and sentimental wishes for the safety of that country. He had realised that Pacifism to be effective must not be a policy of inaction. The Pacifist should not stand dazed before the horror of the war yelling to the belligerents to give up arms.

He had to act and prove that his pacifism was a militant force. The other alternative was merging with Imperialism, as the British Pacifists like Lancelot Hogben, Wells, and Horabin had done. They had favoured the war and tried to improve the British Imperialism by their own ideas.

Gandhi could not take the latter step. He took the former. After Ramgarh we find him trying to adjust non-violent philosophy for action against the Imperialist war. As he was both an apostle of technique of non-violence and the political leader of India, he had to act in a manner that the cause of Pacifism as well as India should not suffer. We find him engaged in forming a synthesis of both. What Gandhi did in the ensuing months was a blend of political expediency as well as idealism. The idea that it was better not to embarrass Britain was as much a sporting offer to that country as it was aimed at checking revolutionary outbreak in India calculated to bring Britain into a direct clash with the Congress.

Gandhi like a good pacifist feared not only War and Imperialism but also revolution. Pacifists in

Germany after the Great War were responsible for checking the spread of Red revolution in that country. In India Gandhi saw to it that the country did not fall under the influence of the Reds during war as France was before the military clique in alliance with foreign Fascists crushed communists.

. Discussing the prospects of Civil Disobedience in April he wrote:—

‘Now Civil Disobedience, if it is really civil, must appear so even to the opponent. He must feel that the resistance is not intended to do him any harm. At the present moment the average Englishman thinks that non-violence is merely a cloak. The Leaguers think that Civil Disobedience is aimed at them more than at the British.

“I protest with all the strength at my command that, so far as I am concerned, there is no desire whatsoever to embarrass the British especially at a time when it is a question of the life and death with them. All I want the Congress to do through Civil Disobedience is to deny the British Government the moral influence which the Congress co-operation would give. The material resources of India and her man-power are already being exploited by the British Government by reason of their control of the whole of this sub-Continent.

“So far as I can see at present mass Civil Disobedience is most unlikely. The choice lies between individual Civil Disobedience on a large scale, very restricted or confined only to one. In every case, there must be the backing of the whole of the official Congress organization and the millions who

though not on the Congress register have always supported the organization with their most effective co-operation."

That was the plan of action of Gandhi—denying moral support to Britain. Thus he hoped to fulfill his duty towards India as well as carry out the policy of non-violent resistance to War.

But before he gave any practical shape to it much water was to run under brooks.

He saw Viceroy in June 1940 and told him that "India wanted complete and unadulterated independence."

This was said to counter the plans of the India Office which aimed at Dominion Status after the War and "stand as you were" during it.

The attitude of the Indian Viceroy was not the same as in the weeks after the War when Gandhi was still. It was less demanding and less violent.

Sooner with it on the basis of Dominion Status, which the Viceroy had let loose a ball on and on. For the British home of the Congress representation of War.

When the Viceroy let loose the ball on and on. For the British home of the Congress representation of War.

Such a situation in the Congress was the result of the Viceroy's policy of non-violent resistance to War.

The Congress was to carry out the policy of non-violent resistance to War.

That was the plan of action of Gandhi—denying moral support to Britain. Thus he hoped to fulfill his duty towards India as well as carry out the policy of non-violent resistance to War.

Chamberlain played a dual role, listening to the Czechs' as well as Hitler so Lord Linlithgow heard Gandhi as well as Jinnah, and while he showed himself sympathetic to the Congress leader he encouraged the Muslim Leaguers to carry on the campaign for division of India.

This could at least show that there was lack of agreement among the Indians.

The League leader who had been so far never summoned by the Viceroy thought it a great honour and imagined that India's destiny finally rested in his hands. Inside the Congress, while the left headed by Nehru did not show any enthusiasm for such negotiations and let Gandhi act, the right with Rajgopalachariar and Satyamurti as its spokesmen wanted to bask in the sun while the fair-weather at Delhi lasted. The result of all their endeavours was the Poona offer which suggested formation of a National Government at Delhi, out of the parties of the present Central Legislature having full powers and functioning during the War. After which a constituent Assembly could frame a constitution for India.

The Viceroy condescended to consider it. Wires buzzed between Delhi and Whitehall, just as they did between Paris, London and Berchtesgaden. The British had decided on their plan of action. It was not one of partition of country as it happened in case of Czechoslovakia but much worse, and that was a tacit approval of Jinnah's plans of partition, a licence to him to go on creating endless tension; and finally maintaining the *status quo* in India. It was a clever move calculated to prevent Congress from acting and

Jinnah from getting what he wanted. But the Indian National Congress was not a party of Dr. Benes to be frightened out of its wits by the British action. Its leader had also decided on his plan of action and that was Civil Disobedience. The movement took the shape outlined in April 1940. It was decided that the British should be asked to give freedom of speech and writing to India, to preach against all wars, failing which individual Congressmen should go forward shouting anti-war slogans and offer themselves for arrest. The first Satyagrahi was a man of Gandhi's Ashram, so far not much known to public, Shri Vinoba Bhave. Gandhi was to remain out and not court imprisonment guiding the movement.

The plan of Gandhi's Satyagrah as well as the enlisting of the personnel for it has been criticised by many people. It was noticed that there was neither the old enthusiasm nor the spirit in several Satyagrahis and although all the leaders courted arrest yet there was no end of confusion among them too about Gandhi's aims. Sardar Sampuran Singh, the leader of the Congress Assembly Party, was not the only man to talk in the Court like Van der Lubbe facing trial for Reichstag burning, making replies which contradicted each other. The writer who was on that occasion confined in District Jail, Multan, met of the centres of Satyagrahi prisoners in Punjab, met several Congress leaders of note and also studied the reaction among the rank and file of the Satyagrahis. He observed that while most said that they had come at the beck and call of Gandhi whose dis-

aplined solliers they were, they were upable to put the interpretation on the struggle Gandhi had done. They did not consider it for freedom of speech and writing to preach against War. So far as they were concerned they wanted the war to continue imagining that the scales would turn ultimately against Britain. In other words the average Satyagarahi was not actuated by the lofty humanist ideals of Pacifism of Gandhi, but by crude anti-British feelings. He, therefore, resented the slow pace of movement and the steriotyped speeches he had to deliver before courting imprisonment which were far from proving a catharises for his pent up emotions.

So when he came in prison, there was a sense of bewilderment and of frustration. This is not to say if he had been violent outside he would have felt peaceful in prison. It was because he did not know what he was fighting for. The non-violent resistance to war, freedom of speech, Venoba Bhave, and finally the fact that Government dared not arrest Gandhi all this baffled the Satyagarahi. The tail ominously wagged in the Satyagarah, and the last batches came at great intervals while many of those leaders who were released never offered themselves for re-arrest.

Jawaharlal Nehru's thunderous speech and the heavy sentence passed on him, was the only notable event of this remarkable Satyagarah. Many other leaders were arrested after him and though individual Congressmen continued to trickle into prison even in the spring of 1941 the movement had spent its force.

Was it then only a freak of the Wardha ascetic? The Anglo-Indian papers called all those arrested for

Satyagrah "cranks" and reserved a "cranks" corner for them.

But the Anglo-Indians in spite of their long residence in India have not understood the Indian mind.

Gandhi did not wish to risk revolutionary action. With Communists on the left and the Muslim League on the right, he steered the middle way. As a diplomatic move it was well-planned. If most Satyagrahis did not understand him or there was bewilderment and frustration, it was the fault of local leaders, who failed to school the Congressmen in Gandhian creed of non-violence. Gandhi had two objects in view. The one was the effect on the public opinion abroad, and the other was blending his Pacifism with India's political needs, so that he should appear at once a redeemer of mankind and a leader of India.

The Civil Disobedience gave him an opportunity for both. Britain could not have tolerated a frontal attack. It had suppressed the communists and it would have suppressed the Congress.

So the Congress action had to appear as semi-religious, semi-political. Venoba Bhave's selection of the idea of freedom of speech and writing were all steps in that direction.

Those around Gandhi knew that the old man was not fighting for merely freedom of speech. Nehru came nearer truth when he said that the Congress demands were part and parcel of the struggle for complete Independence.

The effect on the world opinion, that is as much

as could be gleaned from the press in England and America which was not completely subversive to Anglo-Saxon Imperialism, was tremendous. After the Russo-German war these newspapers and many others which had so far remained indifferent to Indian situation, carried on campaign on behalf of India, and the demand for release of Nehru and other leaders first came from America.

To the British the Civil Disobedience as it had taken place was a great relief and though their Press in India might call the Congressmen as cranks they were in no mood to face a complicated situation in India. The battle of Britain was yet undecided. The Nazis had spread into South Eastern Europe, America, though a steady stream of supplies from there continued to flow to Britain, was far off. The Japs were getting impatient in the east. If they attacked and Indians were in revolt, the British might have to skuttle the Navy and fight from Canada, as an American writer suggested.

Hence the reluctance to arrest Gandhi or to treat the Congress movement as revolt of the Indian people. They took it good humouredly, as the Asquith Government did the demonstrations of suffragettes in 1909.

Gandhi and Linlithgow, each knowing the other's intentions and reserves of strength, played for time and refused to be drawn into a final struggle.

The treacherous attack of Germany on Russia created quite a new situation. The communists were out of the anti-war front. They were appealing for solidarity with Russia and called it a people's war.

still in prison. It was he who embodied the sentiments of the socialists and knew how best to translate them into action.

Till he came out Gandhi did nothing. His lieutenant Patel when released in August 1941, declared that nothing had happened to alter the situation.

The "all or nothing demand," that Gandhi had to put forward later on had already begun to take shape in his mind.

By opposing the splitting up of India in three parts as envisaged by Cripps scheme Gandhi had dropped a hint to his fallowers, that Pakistan was only a kite being flown by the idle, rich rulers of the Muslim League and should in no way deter the Congress from giving its suitable reply to Cripps scheme. The articles which followed in the *Harijan* on the subject of communal unity were written in a similar strain. Instead of the former slogan that unity should precede Independence, now Gandhi said that Independence should come first. And if a struggle was to be launched, it should not be given up due to fears of communal riots. That had been the main argument of Gandhi against the intensification of his Civil Disobedience in 1940. Now he saw that the communalists were receiving official encouragement from England, and Stafford Cripps was putting forward hare-brained schemes about partition of India. If they did not come very near to what the Muslim League, wanted it was because the British Government was seeking to excite the imagination of the Muslim Leaguers and then either to leave them high and dry or to let them be hostile towards the Congress. The astute politi-

cians of Whitehall in fact said to the Congress about Pakistan. "We have not conceded the Muslim League plan; we can't do that. We have instead made a new proposal, which is not what League aims at." And to the Muslim League: "We can't accept your proposal of Pakistan. The Congress won't let us. But we are trying to accommodate you. If you want more, you have only to shout for it."

In December Nehru was released, and in that month Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and strafed and scattered the American Navy which lay in the docks. Part of the American Navy due to some criminal negligence of its naval staff was destroyed without the enemy suffering any great loss.

Japan's action brought war to the door-steps of India.

Civil Disobedience was stopped after release of Nehru and other Congress leaders, though officially no change came in the Congress policy.

Gandhi and Nehru both condemned Japan, and the latter was very sympathetic towards Russia and China. He declared that Russia's and Japan's entry into the war had made a great difference in Indian situation. India felt the danger of Japan acutely. But it was up to British Government to utilise this changed situation by coming to terms with the Congress.

CHAPTER III

GANDHI MILITANT

The statements of Jawahar Lal Nehru and the military reverses suffered by the British and Americans in the Far East led to a searching of hearts on both sides. There was no doubt about it that in those early days of 1941, Nehru anxious to help Russia and China desired an honourable understanding with the British. The British not knowing where the Japs might stop, once the steam roller had moved over Malaya and Singapore, and sharply criticised by the angered Americans, sent out Sir Stafford Cripps. Gandhi who had no illusions left about Britain let Azad and Nehru have their way, just as he allowed the Poona offer to be made to Great Britain. The man who drafted the Poon Resolution, C. Rajagopalachariar was still in favour of a settlement with Britain. In order to make the confusion between his views and that of Azad and Nehru clear it is necessary to declare that while these two represented the Left in the Congress, Rajaji was the spokesman of that faction of the Congress Right which was most enthusiastic about Congress Parliamentary programme and which wanted to avoid as far as possible a rupture with Britain. If it could have its way it would have agreed to accept from Britain much less than what Azad and Nehru wanted, It was not particularly enamoured of Russia and China. It was anti-Japanese because it believed that under Jap domination India would not have even the elementary liberties it had

under British rule. In between these two groups was Gandhi, Pacifist and distrustful of all Imperialisms, whether British or Japanese. He was against any form of armed resistance, but he did want India to offer Non-Co-operation to Japan if it invaded India. Britain was asked to part with power so that Indians should be prepared for such Non-Co-operation with Japan on the widest possible scale. Politically thus, he was nearer to Nehru and Azad than to Rajagopalachariar.

Gandhi did not participate in Cripps negotiations. The Congress was represented by Nehru and Azad. He made the following statement about Cripps to an American journalist at Delhi, while the conversations were on:—

"Sir Stafford is a very good man, but he has entered bad machinery—British Imperialism. He has to improve the machinery, but in the end, it will be the machinery which will get the better of him."

This led to a general belief in America and England that he was responsible for breakdown of Cripps' negotiations. As a matter of fact, no such thing happened. The decision of the Congress to open negotiations was the natural climax of its past ten years' Anti-Fascist policy.

As British Government had sent an emissary to negotiate with it, he took this opportunity to find out if a genuine Anti-Fascist Front could be formed in India. It is silly to imagine that only the British could be concerned about the defence of India, Indians themselves could not be. As for Gandhi, if he had

wished to obstruct settlement he would not have allowed the Poona offer to be made. The National Congress had given him full powers, and he could turn down that proposal. It is reducing politics to acrobatics, by one day calling Gandhi friend of Britain and Nehru and Azad its enemies and the next day doing the reverse. As a matter of fact all the three stood by their historic utterances after the outbreak of war and their present attitude was the natural climax of their past policy. Britain had made an offer of a very spurious value. Was it any wonder that the Congress refused to touch it with the longest pair of tongs? And as for what Gandhi said about Cripps as much had been said by several of his compatriots who did not see eye to eye with him before Hitler's march into Russia.

It was even feared that while in Russia he might play into the hands of reactionaries at home. As he did achieve many good things while in Russia, his critics though unanimous in saying that co-operation with Government had made him shed much of his extremism: nevertheless paid tribute to what he had done. If he had done anything useful in India, all that had been said about him by Gandhi and other people would have been easily forgotten once the controversy was over and Gandhi himself would have come forward to appreciate him. But as things were, he could only be treated as a gift horse of Britain, to be handled cautiously.

Because Gandhi turned out to be right, the remark about Cripps made by him was echoed everywhere. He was himself silent on this matter while the conver-

tions lasted and apart from the above remark to an American journalist, he made no statement. Once the ice was cut he came out with a fierce denunciation of Cripps' proposals. Writing in *Harrison* under the heading "That ill-fated proposal," he said:—

"It is a thousand pities that the British Government should have sent a proposal for dissolving the political deadlock which on the face of it was too ridiculous to find acceptance anywhere and it was a misfortune that the bearer should have been Sir Stafford Cripps, acclaimed as a radical among the radicals and a friend of India. I have no doubt about his good-will. He believed that no one could have brought anything better for India. But he should have known that at least the Congress should not look at Dominion Status even though it carried the right of succession the very moment it was taken. He knew, too, that the proposal contemplated the splitting up of India into three parts each having different ideals of governance. It contemplated Pakistan of the Muslim League's conception. And last of all it gave no real control over defence to responsible ministers."

The fact is that Sir Stafford Cripps having become part of the imperial machinery, unconsciously partook of its quality. Such is its strength. It is the almost invariable experience in India that those Indians who are drawn into it lose their companions in the service and often undo the latter in their loyalty to Imperialism.

Had Sir Stafford remained detached he would have conferred with his radical friends in India and secured

their approbation before undertaking this very difficult mission. If it be said in answer that he could not very well do so, that is exactly what I mean when I say that, having become part of the machinery, he was bound to fall under its spell and could not do the obvious thing."

This outspoken criticism of Cripps scheme marked a new phase of Gandhi's attitude towards the British. Instead of the bed-and-kitchen sentimentalism that was formerly lavished on them, due to the embarrassing situation created by German and later on the Jap Blitz, we find here a veiled attempt to unmask the war time diplomacy of John Bull. Gandhi's pacifism no longer clouds his vision. He does not speak for himself alone, but for the whole Congress when he talks about the unsatisfactory proposals put forward in the Cripps scheme. The hostility towards Dominionstatus expressed by Gandhi confirmed his past views on the subject, and showed that he, supposedly a moderate as compared to Nehru and Bose, could have nothing to do with a scheme which did not admit India's right to complete Independence.

The Qaid-i-Azam taking his cue from Stafford Cripps forthwith announced with the blare of trumpets that he would be no party to any National Government that did not concede Pakistan.

Besides Junnah the Cripps partition scheme encouraged another notable Indian leader in his will o' the wisp ideas of Pakistan ; namely Shri Rajgopal Chariar.

This gallent Madras Statesmen was struck with an idea that if only Congress and League agreed on the plan of vivasection of India a National Goven-

ment would emerge, like rabbits from a conjurer's hat. Cripps had failed because Congress and League differed on the issue of Pakistan. Unlike Gandhi, he had complete faith in the genuineness of desire of British Government to come to some agreement with India. Previously in 1940, when he had tried to put forward the scheme of National Government embodied in the Poona offer Gandhi, who was then not at all willing to put pressure on Britain had assented to the proposal. But now it was different. Rajaji was ploughing a lonely furrow inside the Congress, and Gandhi in an outspoken article in *Harjan* while paying tribute to his sincerity pointed out that the path chosen by him was utterly wrong. The assumption that unity should precede Independence was alien to Gandhi's philosophy and he said so although it meant parting company with a man, who had faithfully kept the bridge with him against the British, and the Indian extremists since the Gaya split of 1923.

Still the opposition to Rajaji in *Harjan* did not mean that Gandhi had succeeded in getting his philosophy accepted by the Congress. Gandhi had not come back to command yet, and the power which he had relinquished to Nehru and Azad after Jap invasion, to act as they thought best in the interests of Nation, still remained with them. They had represented Congress and they spoke for it. They were disillusioned with the Cripps scheme and they made no bones about it. The world press flashed out their latest comments; but since March 1942 the foreign correspondents had also paid attention to Gandhi, and as it happened that his views about Cripps were

substantially the same as those of Nehru and Azad, it was said that he had from behind the scenes torpedoed the Cripps scheme. The statement was only partially correct. Gandhi had begun to take keen interest in day-to-day matters, and to clear the decks for action but he had not so far put any clean cut programme before the nation.

This was to happen gradually. Great opposition had to be weeded out, before the disillusionment expressed with Cripps scheme could find an outlet in some suitable action against the British. *The attack of Japan had created considerable dissensions in Congress. The tight hole in which the British found themselves, was a favourable opportunity for any compromise. The result was that age-old protagonists of policy of appeasement like Rajagopalachariar and Satyamurti, as well as sincere left wing leaders like Nehru and Azad, who wanted a world front against fascism, based on free and equal partnership among the United Nations, had their say. Apart from these there was a small faction, which was leaning towards the Axis and wanted to pull chestnuts out of fire, even if the fire was lit on their own soil by the British and the Japs.

In face of such medley in Congress, Gandhi had remained in the background. But clearly this confusion could not last for long. The climax was reached at Allahabad meeting of A. I. C. C., where as the subsequent publishing, of allegedly secret A. I. C. C. circulars by the Government showed, there were as many different voices as the number of resolutions. Rajagopalachariar was dropped out after heated discussions over his scheme. The rest disagreed

For the first time in the history of India's fight for freedom, the saint and the socialist were nearer to each other than they had been in the past. Each

ascism and oppression. alignment of forces, India must range itself against international political scene. He knew that in the new such sentiments with the day-to-day changes in the life-long friend. Nehru could tell him how to fit bitterness of a man who has been let down by a he could wax indignant at Britain with all the clearly what India was feeling. Being sincere himself the nation from his detached Ashram and express the outer world. Gandhi could feel the pulse of loosing the internationalist's grasp of the realities of the ascetic's vehemence against the British, without Gandhi and Nehru. The Allahabad resolution had Thus a new synthesis had emerged out of views of

Nations should stay to offer resistance to Japan. be asked to leave India and the troops of the United great discussions it was agreed that the British should columnist land and raze it to ground. Finally after proposal, and that they would declare India a fifth thought that the British would never tolerate such a non-co-operation. This was opposed by Nehru, who British the Japs came, India could offer non-violent a temptation to Japan as Burma had. If after the the British to quit India, so as to avoid its becoming tion to the Congress, which called for a demand to after Cripps what? Gandhi had sent his own resolu- the unsatisfactory nature of Cripps proposals, but There was a broad unity among the delegates over to the British and how far it could help the Japanese. about the amount of opposition that was to be offered

understood the other's view point and adjusted himself to it.

Besides the resolution on India's national demands passed at A. I. C. C. meeting several other resolutions inspired by Gandhi had been passed at that meeting while the Congress leaders had been parleying with Britain, Gandhi had been actively interesting himself in the conditions of Indians in Burma, the behaviour of United Nations Army of occupation in India, the scorched earth policy etc.

The refugees from Burma had brought about harrowing tales of their sufferings. The British and the Japs had fought in Burma with as little disregard of the lives of the Indians and the Burmese as has been exhibited by the belligerent Powers towards the peoples of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. Just as the peoples in these countries of North Africa are merely pawns in the game of power politics and are subjected to intense suffering and bombardment by both sides without any hope of freedom at the end of war or indeed any change from their present condition of servility, except the change of masters; so the people of Burma served as cannon fodder to the rival combatants fighting over their prostrate bodies for the possession of oil and other rich products.

The battle for Burma was of as great interest to us as the battles in the Balkans were to Russia before the invasion of that country in June 1941. India's concern was twofold—for the safety of its people there and secondly the lesson to be learned from the military disaster which had overtaken the sister country across the border with whose people it had centuries old ties. It sympathised with them

and wanted to make sure that the same thing would not happen here.

Gandhi's criticism about the situation in Burma was in a similar strain. He wanted freedom for India, which the Burmese never got though they cried hoarse for it. He attacked the military authorities responsible for evacuation of civilians. The Allahabad resolution on Burma which had been passed by the A. I. C. C. called for an inquiry into the disaster.

The Government pough-pooed the suggestion. It couldn't do the same in England, and when disasters came in Norway and Dunkirk appropriate action was taken against people responsible for it.

For the Indians the battle of Rangoon was like

Dunkirk. There was a change of Government in England after Dunkirk and Norway, Churchill coming in place of Chamberlain. It would have been most appropriate for the rump Council at Delhi to have resigned to be followed by the National Government which the Congress wanted. As no such thing happened there was nothing left for Gandhi except to make bitter comments about Burma in "Harijan" and ask the A. I. C. C. to record its protest. When the rest of press was being muzzled or made to toe the Government line, "Harijan" like the "Daily Worker" in the most difficult months after the war, kept up a steady barrage of attacks on the Government. It had much wider influence than "Daily Worker," though it suffered in the end the same fate at the hands of India's Herbert Morrison—Reginald Maxwell, whose career as Home Member has been one long story of repression against Nationalists, Socialists and Communists and who has outdone Morrison

in gagging the activities of the left press.

Thus the carrying on of campaign against the policy of the "rump Council" at Delhi in columns of "Harijan" was no easy matter.

Danger of Government interference before the opinion of the people had been fully mobilised was always there. And over the A. I. C. C. meeting itself, the Government and its Home Member Maxwell had a strict eye just as Morrison had over the deliberations of People's Convention in London.

Several resolutions were passed. Among them was the one dealing with the question of Burma and the behaviour of Army of occupation in India. The latter question had received greater publicity in "Harijan," because every day complaints had poured to Gandhi, about the indecent behaviour of foreign soldiers towards Indian women. Power-drunk foreign soldiers treated the womenfolk of this country much as the Prussian soldiers did in France after the war of 1870 or the Jap soldiers did in Nanking after its occupation in 1938. It was left to Guy de Maupassant to inculcate a spirit of insurrection among his countrymen by painting the true picture of Prussian officers and soldiers in his immortal piece *Boul-de-Souf* (the ball of Fat), and thus make it possible for his countrymen to clear their land of foreign soldiers. Again in China in our own times it was Chiang-Kai-Shek and great leaders of Chinese eighth route army who after the rape of Nanking pledged themselves to clear off the Japs from their soil by a concerted military action. They are fulfilling their pledge to-day.

Gandhi had the statesmanship of Chiang-Kai-Shek and the imagination of Guy de Maupassant, and his

utterances about foreign soldiers were creating a great awakening among people but it was a bloodless revolution. It did not envisage use of violence against foreign soldiers, and it did not aim at clearing them off Indian soil as the Frenchmen and the Chinese had done in their own country. The soldiers could remain here for some time, not as army of occupation as the Germans did in 1870, 1914, and now in 1943 in France, but as an expeditionary force of Allied nation, like the B.E.F. in France in 1940, without indulging in any orgy of violence against women. The withdrawal of soldiers was to be the natural climax of India's freedom but it could take place later on. What should be done now was a withdrawal of British political power followed by a free India, Government which should make the foreign army subordinate to it, just as the Americans volunteer pilots in China are to Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-Shek. Considering the justice meted out by Frenchmen to Germans and the Chinese to the Japs for molestation of their women, Gandhi's criticism in Harijan and the A.I.C.C. resolution were mild rebukes.

Instead of inciting racial hatred against foreign soldiers in *Harijan*, in which he should have been as much justified as the British press was when it indulged in violent recriminations against Japan following the stripping of British women outside Tientsin, Gandhi only aimed at strengthening the bonds between two races by such action. While his utterances awakened the Indians to the realization of the degradation to which they were subjected, it enjoined on them to exercise restraint. The British were asked to stop such behaviour, not under a threat of

violence but as an appeal to their good sense.

All this was not likely to keep the cause of the united nations. Consider, for instance, the case of Roumania. She is an ally of Germany. Roumanians, however, unwillingly fight side by side with the German *Wehrmacht*. Suppose the German soldiers were to indulge in the orgies of King Carol picking up each a Lupescue, while the Roumanians were asked to aid them in Russia, there is no doubt that to a man the Roumanians would refuse. The whole German military machine would collapse. The Nazis could very well do such a thing in a country which they treated as a slave state like Yugoslavia, where they could not get any military aid for Russia but they could not do it in Roumania or Hungary or Italy.

That is about the country whose collaboration with Roumanians is not the pattern we wish to follow. India if it were free would not want the sort of alliance Germans and Roumania had. It wants to aid the Allies as entirely an Independent Nation.

But the British behaviour was not even what the Nazis were doing in Roumania. It was much worse. It was clear they did not want to enlist India for freedom on side of Allies as Gandhi wanted, but to keep it in subjection.

No wonder then that in May 1942 when an American journalist asked Gandhi if his demand were accepted would it not increase insecurity in the country, he replied that insecurity had become chronic. It was no longer felt, but the disease which was not felt was worse than which was felt. Such was his view at that time. Living in an atmosphere of intense crises, he had begun to feel that the situation that he faced had come to stay.

It was like Germany after the Ruhr occupation when the people there ceased to have faith in anything, considering the instability and insecurity around them as part and parcel of the civilisation bequeathed to them after the war. It was in that mood that the Germans towards the close of decade finally accepted the Nazi slogan "Better a terrible end than an endless terror." That was exactly the stage which Gandhi had reached. After telling the American journalist that insecurity was chronic he became much more desperate and like the Nazis and said that even anarchy was preferable to British rule. His reasoning was simple. India was in a permanent state of crisis; the pangs of the sufferings were worse than what could happen if the British went. Why not demand their withdrawal? Those foreigners who ridiculed the Congress demand were the same people who backed up Hitler when he rose to power and declared that since German people had elected him as Chancellor it was no business of theirs to interfere in internal affairs of other states. If the Germans facing an endless terror of crises preferred the terrible end of Nazi revolution why could not the Indians have a similar change if they liked?

It was not necessary that the revolution should take here the same shape which it took in Nazi Germany. Nazism is alien to the Indian soil. But there is no doubt that India had a right to face any anarchy if she so wished.

The demand of British withdrawal was receiving an added impetus this time, because unlike the former occasions the Indian industrialists and capitalists were arrayed on the side of Congress. The Government insistence on scorched earth policy and Gandhi's

denunciation of it in *Harijan* had contributed much to increase the hostility between the two. Besides, the industrialists saw dreams of a free outlet for *laissez faire* in an independent India governed by their friends, the Congressmen. Like Fritz Thyssen and other German industrialists who financed Hitler to benefit from Revolution, the Indian Captains of Industry aided the Congress so that they should have their place secure when the British cleared the decks.

Thus psychologically and politically never was time more ripe for putting forward India's demand. From Allahabad A.I.C.C. meeting down to July 1942, Gandhi had continuously warned the British Government by writing articles in *Harijan* about the great need of accepting India's demand and dire consequences which would follow if it was not done so. As the Viceroy and his advisers continued to ignore the voice of Gandhi, it was decided at the Working Committee meeting in mid-July to implement the Allahabad Resolution with some decisive action, such as Civil Disobedience movement on a large scale.

The resolution called for an alliance between a free India and United Nations as a military need if disaster was to be averted. It read:

The Committee views with dismay the deterioration of situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts and conveys to the Russian and Chinese people its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom. This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathise with the victims of aggression to examine the

The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not only affect materially the fortunes of the war, but will bring all subjects

Indians be inspired to fight the Japanese. Only thus could the in India was the first thing. But the British rule footing with other countries. But the British rule of world, in which India could play her part on equal Imperialism. It wanted a federation of all free nations countries to be freed from all forms of aggression by the people in Malaya, Burma, Iraq, Iran and other countries of the East, it declared the Congress wanted Discussing that question of freedom of other filled with hope and enthusiasm. "

be judged, and the people of Asia and Africa will be freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations has become the crux of the question, for by the curse. India, the classic land of modern Imperialism, of the ruling power has become a burden and a sion of Empire, instead of adding to the strength of the imperialist tradition and method. The posses- of subject and colonial countries, and the continuation based not on freedom so much as on the domination failure is inherent in them. These policies have been into success, for past experience has shown that policies and methods that failure can be converted failures. It is not by adhering to such aims and Nations, which has led to repeated and disastrous foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied

and oppressed humanity on the side of the united nations, and give these nations, whose ally India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of British Imperialism and the taint of that Imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations". And having declared India's freedom indispensable for winning the war, the Committee did not talk about embarrassing the British Government. That epoch was over, when action had to be taken very guardedly, because in a war of rival Imperialism, slightest action against one might have benefited the other. Now it was different. The war was a people's war in which the people of Russia and China were making a heroic stand. Not acting now was stabbing those gallant people in the back. And yet how to act? With the British determined to keep the control of war in hands of a white bureaucracy, acting under them without people of India being satisfied first was not only betraying the cause of India, but also of the United Nations. The Congress did not want India to become a second Burma. It chose its form of action, which was non-cooperating with the British, leaving them alone responsible for the reverses, if ever it came to that in India. The people were called to action in the following words :—

"The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response, and criticism made in many foreign quarters have shown an ignorance of India's and the world's need and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom, which is significant

of a mentality of domination and racial superiority which cannot be tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause.

The A. I. C. C. would yet again at this last moment in the interest of world freedom renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an Imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on widest possible scale so that the country might utilise all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken."

The Working Committee called a meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Bombay to confirm the above resolution. Gandhiji was given command once again. In a speech, which was restrained and moderate in tone he appealed to the American President and the Chinese Generalissimo to intervene in Indian dispute and save India for freedom. Those powers however well disposed they were towards Indian sentiments treated the Gandhiji's appeal very much as England and

France did the appeals of Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg before the *Anschluss*.

So Gandhi went ahead, bitterly disillusioned with all western powers and with unflinching faith in the righteousness of his cause, saying :—

“Even if all the United Nations oppose me, even if the whole of India tried to persuade me that I am wrong, I will go ahead not for India's sake alone but for sake of the world.” And again :

“I have pledged the Congress ‘will do or die.’”

The next day after this speech, with the suddenness which the Nazis exhibited in pouring their troops into the Austria soil and arresting Schuschnigg and other leaders, the British Government with evident knowledge of Washington ordered the arrest of all Congress leaders. Hitler had his Seyess Inquarts in Austria to betray their fellow countrymen and be instrumental in arrest of the Austrian leader. The British had the rump Council of Viceroy's Indian advisers who were a party to that infamous coup at Bombay on August 10. It was Sunday. And it proved to be as much tragic day in our history as the bloody Easter Sunday of year 1917 was to the Irishmen.

Arrests of Gandhi and Congress leaders was followed by riots and bloodshed. In spite of Gandhi's warning against violence, the passions were let loose and heavy toll of life was recorded on the first day

Other leaders were rounded up in their respective provinces. The movement once the leaders were impressed fell in the hands utterly irresponsible people and what was aimed at to be passive resistance on the widest possible scale became a violent struggle.

How far the Congress was responsible for it is obvious enough. The Congress could no more be guilty of violence than Communist leaders in Germany for burning of Reichstag or some stray deaths of Nazis at Hamburg and other places where the storm troopers clashed with the workers. Just as in Germany Communist leaders were in prison before Goering ignited the sparks that set ablaze the finest Parliament in Europe, and ordered Nazi legions to commit violence on unarmed civilians, so the Indian leaders were deprived of their liberty long before the bloodshed began and could not restrain either the Government or the people.

How for they were guilty can be decided only by Independent people and not by the Government which is aparty in the conflict.

The British held a trial of Reichstag Burning in London in which eminent jurists of world participated. They took independent evidence and exonerated the German communists of all charges. Let them hold a similar trial in London of Gandhi and other Congress leaders, for the life of Gandhi is no less dear to his countrymen than that of Dimitroff was to the left wing people of Europe.

CHAPTER IV. FIGHTING ON EMPTY STOMACH.

Whatever fighting has taken place between the Congress and the British, has been done by Gandhi, whose fast of twenty-one days is the only non-violent weapon that has been used by him in this struggle. A brilliant Yankee journalist writing in Texas' "Houston Post" remarked about Gandhi's fast that "Britain would remember him as one warrior who fought fast on empty stomach." That seems to be a correct description of Gandhi's fast. He has been fighting on empty stomach for 21 days to demand the same justice from the world, for which Dimitrov pleaded from the bar of Leipzig Nazi Court. What has he done that he should be incarcerated like that? That was what he asked in his letters to Viceroy, whose reply was only enumerating of the atrocities committed by Indians against British civilians and soldiers.

It is a pity that the British cannot show the sense of humour that American journalist has done. Instead of admiring the courage of the old man who has fought on empty stomach, releasing him and giving him an opportunity to solve the Indo-British tangle they have prepared a monument of Inequities done by the people of this country. This should at any rate confirm the opinion of continentals that the British have no sense of humour.

Gandhi's reply to Viceroy's charges has been simple and sensible enough. He has pointed out the

amount of repression which the Government has used, and suggested that in several cases the violence has been a retaliation of official repression. The Government communique itself admits the immense loss of life of Indians as compared to those of the British. The number of Englishmen killed in disturbances is less than the casualties suffered by the British in the early days of war during a single raid on London by Nazis against whom they did not retaliate quite for a long time. If being at war with Germans, they could not hit back for several months and avenge the loss of British civilians why act differently in India, when some British lose their lives? And if you have done it and taken more than treble the lives that the Indians took, why not relax the stiff upper lip, release Gandhi and negotiate with him?

Why should this undeclared war on Indian people continue? Or is it a second front which the British have opened to help the hard-pressed Chinese and the Russians?

If so, it is not likely to please these allies of Britain and U. S. A.

The absence of criticism in Chungking and Moscow about the affairs in India should not be construed as pat on the back of John Bull to go ahead with his plan of unrestrained repression. The Chinese and the Russians have their own doubts about the British Government as it is at present constituted, and though Dr. Goebells may be exaggerating, there is no doubt that the Russians after the British refusal to try Hess and create Second Front have no illusions left that the

of Britain

may be anti-Fascist and fighting the war to end slavery in the world, the British Government have not shed its imperialist outlook.

The Soviet attitude about Bylo Russia and Ukranian population in Poland; coupled with Stalin's distinction about defeat of German Government as opposed to suppression of German people show that differences very real exist.

Madame Chiang Kai-shek has voiced the disillusionment of her country with British policy, in her recent speech before U. S. A. Congress.

Such being the state of affairs, psychologically, we have much in common with the Russian and the Chinese. Our grievances are similar. The men who refuse to try Hess are also the men who refuse to release Gandhi or alternatively to try him.

The Russian and Chinese people should consider India as a part of their broad strategy which aims at final annihilation of Fascism.

India's sympathy for these two countries is well known. So far as their intervention in Indian affairs is concerned, Gandhiji writing in "Harijan" before his arrest, had said :—

"So far as we are concerned, we have closed our hearts. As we have said in our resolution, all hopes have been dashed to pieces. The burden is shifted. But it is open to America to Britain, to China, and even to Russia to plead for India which is pining for freedom. And if an acceptable proposal is made it would certainly be open to the Congress or any other party to entertain or accept it. It would be churlish on our part if we said we don't want to talk to anybody and we will by our own

strong hearts expel the British."

It is always open to Russia and China to intervene. But greater responsibility is of America and Britain. They cannot defeat Japan or knock out Germany, if the Russians and Indians do not aid against the former, or if China remains dissatisfied. The Axis will not be knocked out by pinprick attacks in the Solomons or victories in Tunisia.

The entire British policy about the East is wrong. This shows that the men controlling the affairs at Whitehall cannot as was pointed out in A. I. C. C. meeting "think straight." What the Indian leaders had been saying about Churchill and others is now being openly said in Chungking and Moscow. Let London call them fifth columnists!

Nor, can the duty of the Viceroy's Executive Councilors towards India be minimised at such a juncture. It has been said that this rump Council was a party to the infamous coup on Bombay on August 10. Messrs Aney and Sarkar could by no means be forgiven for that action now that they have resigned. If Wang-Ching-Wei were to resign the Presidency of Nanking Puppet Government and wish to join Chiang-Kai-Shek, he would be promptly executed on arrival in Chungking, as Kuomintang has already passed death sentence on him. The Indian National Congress and the people of India consider Mr. Aney hardly better than Wang-Ching-Wei. He is the first great Congress leader who has been found hunting with hares and running with the hounds. He would have to answer to free India for his apostasy.

And the other members of Britain's Puppet

Government at Delhi should also think what they are doing. They still enjoy some popularity, among certain members of their community, if not among Nationalist-minded India. It is unlikely that any right thinking man should support them if the Congress leaders continue to remain in prison for some months more. And what have these Quislings got in return for serving John Bull? The powers that Britain has delegated to them are not a fraction of powers which Hitler's Quislings like Laval enjoy. They have not the powers of Laval, but of Petain. Neither Britain trusts them nor Nationalist India. They might still think if the game is worth the candle.

As sure as Petain's regime collapsed in France, one day this Puppet Government at Delhi must resign, followed by not a Laval regime, for the only Laval that we had in India the late Sir Sikandar is dead—but by either an allied military occupation, with General Blissel of American forces having the powers of the German General Von Stulpangel in France, and with Viceroy as a kind of England's High Commissioner in American India or alternatively the coming to power of India's General de Gaul—Gandhi who lies imprisoned in Aga Khan Palace.
